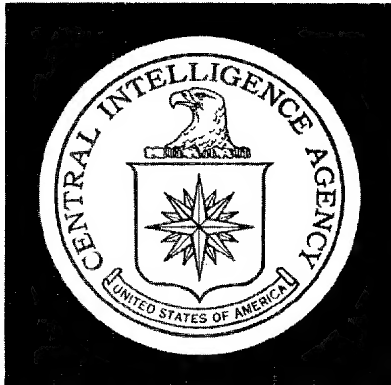


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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

MEMORANDUM

The Situation in Vietnam

ARMY review(s) completed.

NSA review completed

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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

In the first significant ground operation in South Vietnam in three days, elements of the US 1st Calvary Division conducting Operation THAYER II on 17 December killed 50 Viet Cong in a six-hour battle northwest of Qui Nhon in coastal Binh Dinh Province.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: The only significant activity over the weekend involving US forces occurred during the conduct of Operation THAYER II in Binh Dinh Province (Paras. 1-3). Actions involving South Vietnamese forces north and southwest of Saigon are reported (Paras. 4-5). The upsurge in VC activity in the Mekong Delta continued with three VC attacks reported (Paras. 6-9). Reports of VC plans to attack Da Nang Air Base between the Christmas and New Year's cease fire are reported (Para. 10).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Recent Constituent Assembly developments were highlighted by a decision on 17 December to include a vice president in addition to a president and a prime minister in the future government (Paras. 1-3).

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

V. Communist Political Developments: Peking has protested the alleged US bombing of its Hanoi embassy (Paras. 1-2). At a Peking rally Chen Yi has pledged Chinese support for Vietnam in strong but routine language (Paras. 3-4).

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ANNEX:

South Vietnam Battle Statistics

1963 through the week of 4-10 Dec 66

- Weapons and Personnel Losses
- Viet Cong Attacks and Incidents

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The only significant military activity over the weekend involving American ground forces occurred in the II Corps where elements of the 1st Air Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) have been conducting Operation THAYER II since 25 October. Two US battalions engaged and surrounded an estimated enemy battalion about 38 miles north-northwest of Qui Nhon in coastal Binh Dinh Province on 17 December. The enemy broke contact six hours after the initial engagement leaving 50 killed. Three NVA soldiers were also captured. The enemy force is believed to be the 9th Battalion of the 18th NVA Regiment.

2. US losses in this engagement were 26 killed and 70 wounded. In addition, four US helicopters received major damage and nine received minor damage from enemy ground fire. One other helicopter was destroyed while attempting to extract a damaged helicopter from the area. Casualties to US helicopter crews were two killed and eight wounded.

3. An additional 15 enemy soldiers were killed in two separate engagements during Operation THAYER II on the morning of 18 December. US forces suffered no casualties in these encounters.

Other Military Action

4. Elsewhere in South Vietnam, four VC were killed and 12 captured by South Vietnamese forces during the conduct of one-day Operation CUU LONG 48/66, about 43 miles south-southwest of Saigon. Over 24,000 grenades and 100 mines were seized or destroyed. South Vietnamese casualties were three wounded.

5. Northwest of Saigon, an enemy force of unknown size attacked a South Vietnamese battalion with small arms, mortar and grenade fire on 17 December. Friendly casualties were 14 killed and four

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wounded while enemy losses were three killed. In addition, 23 South Vietnamese civilians were wounded.

VC Activity in the Mekong Delta

6. The recent upsurge in Viet Cong harassing actions in the IV Corps area continued over the week-end. On 17 December, an estimated Viet Cong platoon attacked the headquarters of the ARVN 13th Regiment. Friendly casualties in this attack were 18 killed and 14 wounded. In addition, 57 individual weapons, two crew-served weapons, and nine radios were lost while one truck was destroyed and three others damaged.

7. South Vietnamese forces--in reaction to this attack and others in Vinh Long Province recently--reported killing 19 Viet Cong and capturing nine prisoners during Operation NGO QUYEN, a one-day reaction sweep on 17 December.

8. The VC also attacked a Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) outpost in Kien Tuong Province on 17 December with mortar, small arms, and automatic weapons fire. The estimated 80-man Viet Cong force killed 14, wounded six, and captured 18 weapons. Enemy casualties were not known.

9. In Chuong Thien Province, the Long My district town was attacked on 18 December by an estimated enemy company. South Vietnamese losses were seven killed and three wounded as against enemy losses of one killed.

Threat to Da Nang Air Base

10. MACV has received a report giving enemy plans for attacking the Da Nang Air Base between the Christmas and New Year's cease fires. This projected plan was also mentioned by a rallier [redacted]

[redacted] He stated that the attack

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was to be made by a company-size element and would probably occur on the west side of the air base. One squad is to cut the wire while a platoon will perform demolition operations. Two other platoons will provide security. The attack is also to be supported by three 81-mm. and one 120-mm. mortars.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. On 17 December the Constituent Assembly decided that the future government should have a vice president in addition to a president and a prime minister. During the debate on 16 and 17 December, proponents of this principle argued that a vice president is necessary to maintain the continuity of the government should the president die or be disabled. Opponents declared that a vice-presidential position is unnecessary, and would conflict with that of the prime minister. The principle was adopted by a large margin. However, the specific responsibilities of the vice president, his relationship to the president, and the problem of presidential succession will not be dealt with by the assembly until the details of constitutional provisions are discussed later.

2. The assembly is to begin a discussion of the principles of local government on the morning of 19 December. There have been indications that a significant number of delegates favor a wide application of the principle of popularly elected local government, which would generally result in more local autonomy than is now the case. This would become especially true if the principle were extended to the key position of province chief, all of whom are now appointed, and almost all of whom are active duty military officers.

3. Premier Ky, who was scheduled to give the assembly a general briefing during the afternoon of 19 December, has the flu, and his talk has been postponed until later in the week.

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III. NORTH VIETNAMESE MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. After a delay of two days, Peking charged in a 16 December Foreign Ministry statement that its Hanoi embassy had been "deliberately bombed by US pirate aircraft" during a 14 December air strike. The following day, the Chinese ambassador in Hanoi held a press conference to provide detailed information on the alleged bombings. He claimed that his embassy had been "heavily damaged" by a "US air-to-ground missile" during a deliberate raid by four aircraft. The ambassador showed the assembled journalists fragments of what he claimed was the US missile and photos of the damage.

2. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] at least a portion of the embassy's roof was damaged during the 14 December air strike. [REDACTED] damage to the nearby Rumanian Embassy. It is possible that in both cases the damage was the result of antiaircraft flak falling into the area or that it was caused by a malfunctioning surface-to-air (SAM) missile which missed its target and failed to detonate before reaching the ground. Pilot reports indicate heavy flak and numerous SAMs in the area during the strike. At the same time, it is conceivable that ordnance jettisoned from US aircraft in the area was responsible for the damage. It is not unusual for US aircraft to jettison ordnance when threatened by MIGs or SAMs, as they were on the 14th.

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Peking Rally in Support of Vietnam

3. At a Peking rally on 18 December to mark the 6th anniversary of the founding of the Liberation Front and to denounce the US "bombing" of Hanoi, Chou En-lai, Tao Chu, and other top Chinese leaders heard Foreign Minister Chen Yi declare that the US has stepped up its "war provocations" against China but that the Chinese would continue their "firm support" of the Vietnamese.

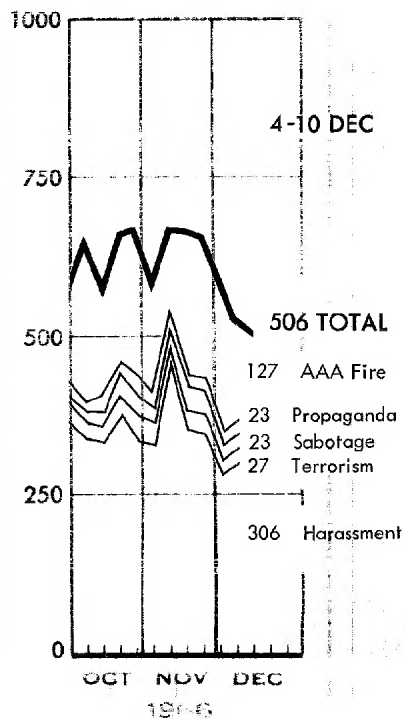
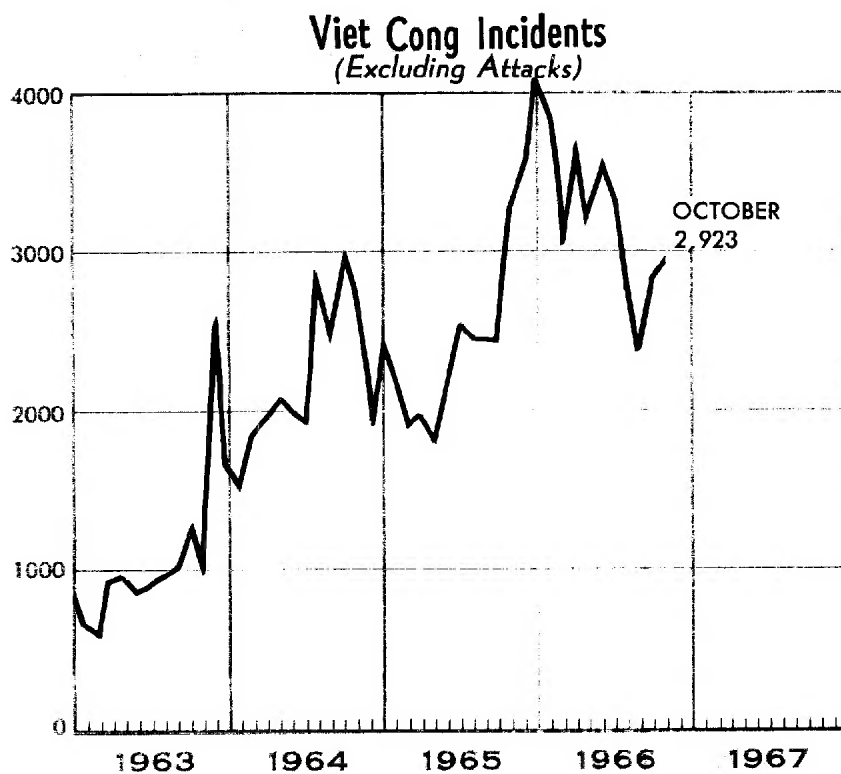
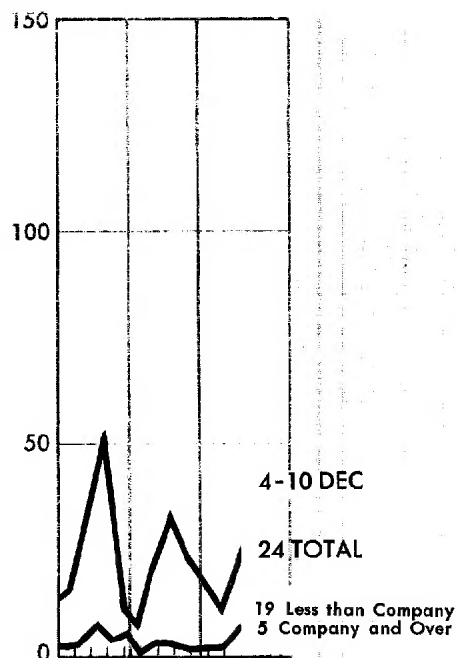
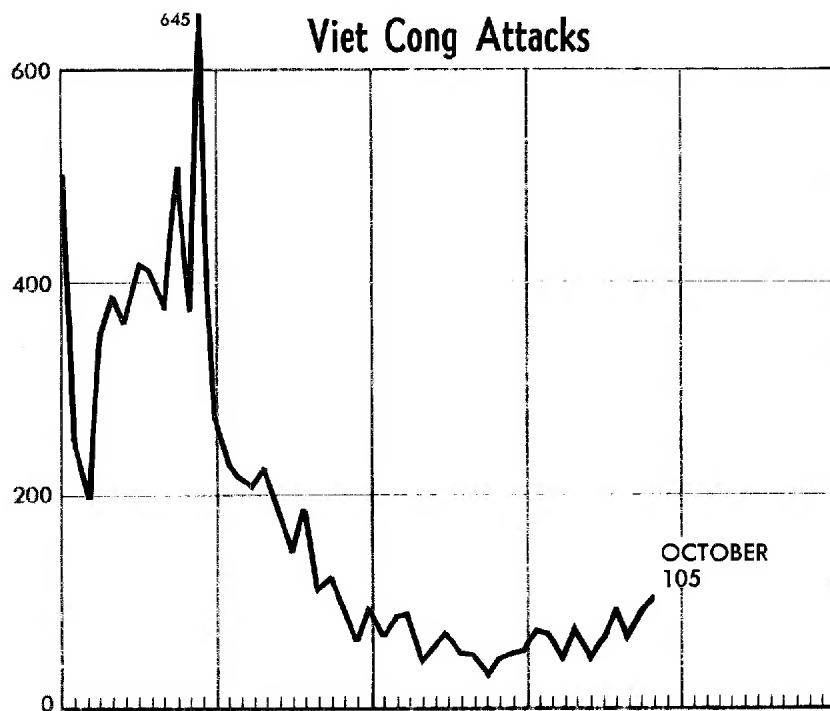
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4. The rally passed a resolution declaring that the Chinese would join with the Vietnamese to deal "devastating blows" to the US whenever the Vietnamese "deem it necessary." This parallels the Chinese response to the initial US bombing of petroleum installations near Hanoi and Haiphong last June. Peking also raised the possibility of "volunteers" on that occasion after an almost complete silence on the subject since the fall of 1965. Moreover, the rally resolution goes no further than Peking's standard pledge to send men "if needed," and Chen's speech, in conformity with Peking's standard line, continued to imply that the Vietnamese were defeating the US on their own.

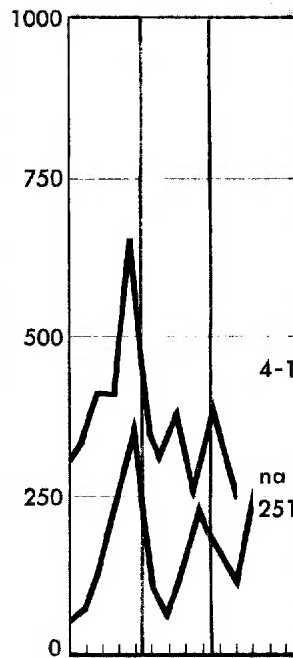
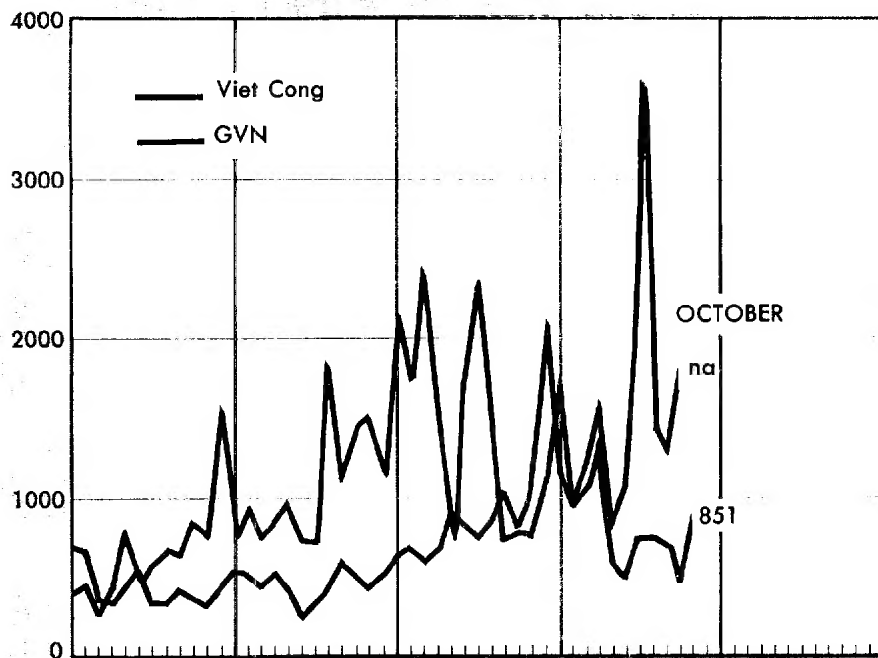
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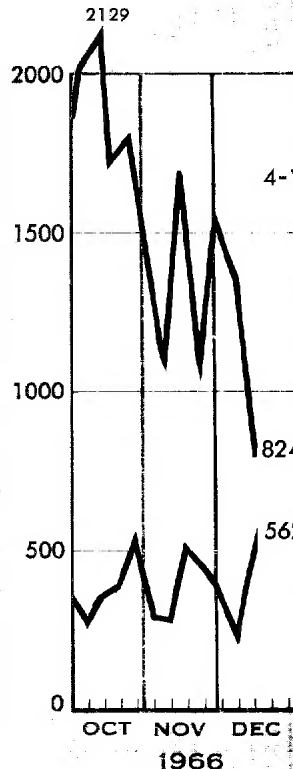
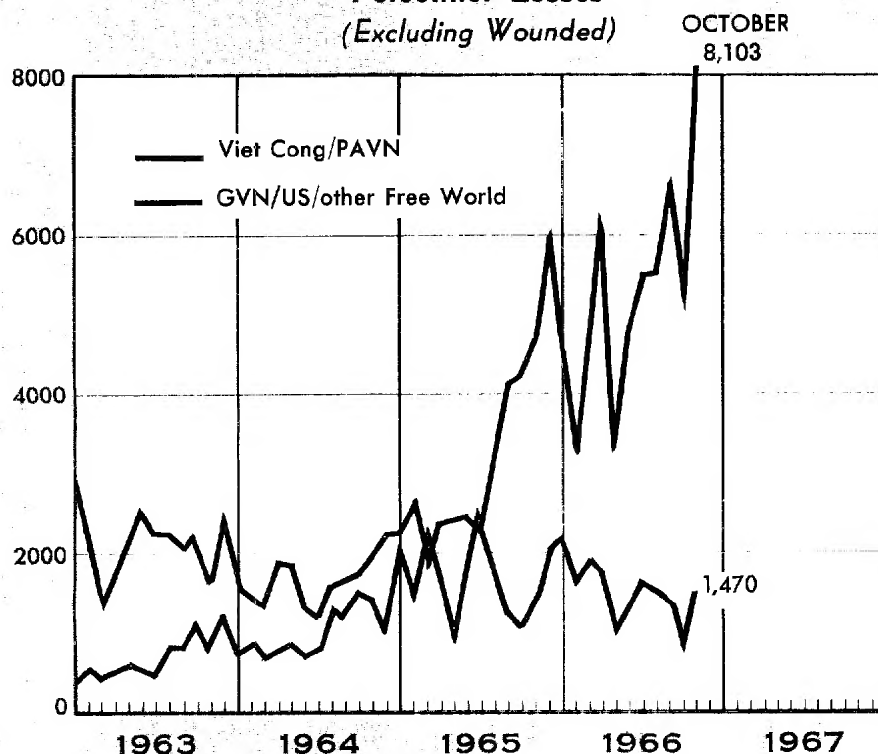
Weapons Losses

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Personnel Losses

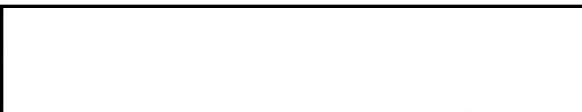
(Excluding Wounded)



US Casualties to Date: Killed 6,234 Wounded 36,240 Captured 94 Missing 374

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